

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNY #0397/01 1091218  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 191218Z APR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5534  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 0225  
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 2300  
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PRIORITY 7908  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 1772  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 0093  
RUEHRK/AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK PRIORITY 0799  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 3090  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0019

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 000397

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

EUR/NB (VMIDDLETON, RDALLAND)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [NO](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN STATE SECRETARY MEETS CUBAN OFFICIALS,  
AVOIDS CASTRO OPPOSITION

Classified By: CDA Kevin M. Johnson, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Norwegian MFA State Secretary Raymond Johansen visited Cuba from April 9 through April 11, meeting with several Cuban governmental officials. The Cuban trip was part of a three country Latin American tour (also including Colombia and Ecuador) which intended to place Latin America on the map at the MFA. Johansen did not meet Cuban opposition members, raising criticism from Norwegian Conservative party parliamentarian Peter Gitmark. Johansen claims he was given the choice to visit Cuba and engage in political discussions with GOC representatives, or not visit at all, although MFA members of the Norwegian delegation did separately meet with Cuban dissidents. End Summary.

Johansen Engages Cuban Government, Personally Avoids  
Opposition

-----  
12. (U) Calling his meetings "useful and critical", Johansen stated that members of his delegation did meet with dissidents although he hadn't personally. The Norwegian daily Aftenposten wrote that Johansen stated an interest in stepping up a dialogue with Cuba, while commenting that Raul Castro seems to be showing a more inclusive leadership style, evidenced by "greater latitude" given to the Catholic church. The article quoted Johansen stating that it was the "right thing" for Norway to have contact with Cuba, such as that sought by Spain. The Norwegian daily Dagbladet also reported that the State Secretary criticized U.S. foreign policy, with Johansen stating that "The U.S. has an entirely wrong way of doing politics vis-a-vis another country. I have little confidence that this (sort of) policy leads to a regime change." With respect to U.S. foreign policy concerning Cuba, Johansen commented to Dagbladet that "I register that Fidel Castro has survived all American presidents since John 1F. Kennedy, and that the American boycott policy has not yielded any results."

13. (C) On April 17, we met with MFA Latin America Section Director General Herberth Linder and Adviser Oynstein Johansen, who returned today from the State Secretary's trip. Linder said the Norwegians seek to reopen a political dialogue with Cuba. He confirmed that the State Secretary would have been denied GOC political meetings if he met with Cuban opposition members. The GON's position is that it is

better to have a dialogue promoting human rights than to not have any dialogue at all. (Note: Conservative politician Peter Gitmark told CDA that State Secretary Johansen might have lost a GOC meeting or two if he had done the right thing and had seen the dissidents, but it would have been worth it. End note).

¶4. (C) Oynstein Johansen described the State Secretary's meetings as positive. Johansen raised human rights issues with Cuban officials on several occasions, and stated that a political dialogue must include a dialogue on Cuba's human rights policies and treatment of its dissidents. According to Linder, the State Secretary did not view the trip as creating a double standard, citing the example of Iran where Norway "disagrees tremendously with what they do and stand for" yet still maintains a dialogue.

¶5. (C) Although there are no concrete plans, the GON is considering small scale cooperation with the Cuban government. One potential area includes Norway supporting the UN Development Program's natural disasters program, which Cuba strongly embraces. Separately, Johansen noted there has not been any discussion of the GON coordinating a Cuban policy with Spain.

#### MFA Delegation Members Separately Meet Dissidents, Cuban Officials

-----

¶6. (C) MFA delegation members met with Cuban dissidents, and believed the dissidents understood Johansen's decision and did not criticize the State Secretary's failure to meet with opposition members. Dissidents allegedly voiced concerns that the U.S. policy toward Cuba provided the GOC with an excuse to clamp down on the Cuban opposition. Citing

examples of a thawing government position toward dissidents, Linder spoke with Cuba's Catholic cardinal who confirmed an improvement of relations between the government and the Catholic Church. One example is a letter from Raul Castro to the Havana Catholic bishop wishing the cleric "the best of success in his work," a note which shocked Church officials.

¶7. (C) Linder, a long-time Latin American expert, noticed a much more relaxed attitude from his Cuban colleagues. For example, Cuban diplomats, known to utilize English translators despite being well-versed in the language, relied less on translators and spoke frequently in English. He attributed this behavior to a possible change in leadership style by Raul Castro, who delegates more and, unlike his brother, is less of a micro-manager. Linder emphasized that despite this relaxed atmosphere, the Communist Party did not embrace "new attitudes," and that any seeming relaxation of relations with dissidents by the GOC were "minimal steps."

#### Cuban Officials Criticize U.S.

-----

¶8. (C) The Cuban officials described relations with the U.S. as difficult and felt threatened, particularly by the Bush Administration's policies. Cuban governmental officials hinted to Linder and Oynstein Johansen that if the U.S. lifted its embargo, the GOC's treatment of dissidents would be different. The Norwegians noted that their Cuban colleagues were less worried about the future, given recent US Democratic Party election victories in the House and Senate.

#### Norwegian Opposition Criticizes Visit

-----

¶9. (U) Conservative Party Parliamentarian Peter Gitmark remarked to Aftenposten that the GON "continues to legitimize the communist regime." Calling Johansen's decision "terribly disappointing," he noted that the Cuban opposition was also not invited to the traditional 17th of May breakfast (the Norwegian national day) at the Norwegian Embassy in Havana. Aftenposten also reported that Gitmark stated, "The

Conservative party feels that Johansen should have stayed home if it was impossible to have meetings with the opposition." He called it a "pity" that Norwegian government "does not take democratization in Cuba seriously," warning that given Johansen's high political position, and failure to speak with both the Cuban government and opposition, the visit contributed to legitimizing the "communist regime."

¶10. (C) On April 11, CDA and Pol/Econ officer met with Gitmark, who emphasized his disappointment with Johansen's visit. Restating the comments he made to Aftenposten, Gitmark underscored that Johansen's visit sent the wrong message, legitimizing the Castro regime's behavior.

¶11. (C) Comment. State Secretary Johansen's meeting illustrates a continued concern that Norway's foreign policy continuously focuses upon engaging in dialogue, even with regimes which oppress dissidents. On one hand, Johansen voices the need to jump-start a political dialogue with Cuban governmental officials, pointing out that human rights concerns was one of the discussion topics with Cuban officials. Alternatively, he did not meet with any Cuban opposition leaders, which may create the perception that Norway legitimizes the Cuban government's behavior toward the Cuban opposition, and endorses Castro's oppressive human rights policies.

JOHNSON